

MINUTES
TOWN OF GROTON
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
SEPTEMBER 18, 2012 - 7:00 P.M.
GROTON TOWN HALL ANNEX - COMMUNITY ROOM 2

Members Present: Somers
Alternates Present: Brady, Moriarty, Everett
Absent: Sarasin, Kimenker
Staff: Quinn, Galetta

Commissioner Somers called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

MOTION: To nominate Somers as chairman pro tem

Motion made by Everett, seconded by Moriarty, so voted unanimously.

Somers sat Everett for Sarasin and Moriarty for Kimenker. He also sat Brady as a regular member and as Secretary for the meeting. Brady read the Call of the Hearing.

MOTION: To waive the reading of the hearing procedure

Motion made by Somers, seconded by Moriarty, so voted unanimously.

I. PUBLIC HEARINGS

HDC 12-42 – 59 Pearl Street; Joanne Carnevale, owner/applicant; Driveway. PIN #261914433119

Robert Carnevale and Steven Young presented to the Commission for Joanne Carnevale owner of 59 Pearl Street. The applicant is seeking permission to open an existing stone wall in order to put in a driveway apron and entrance to the subject property from Pearl Street. The driveway will enter toward an existing outbuilding that is currently used as a studio. The proposal includes salvaging as many stones from the wall as possible in order to create the 9' of curbing that is required. The drive grade will be 10% and rise up to the level of the wall. The picket fence will remain the same on the top elevation. The gates on the fence will be manually operated and the plan is to leave them closed particularly during the day. The design intent is not to be disruptive to the streetscape. The driveway is 11' wide. Staff noted driveways 11' or less do not fall under HDC purview. The Commission will rule on the wall cut. It was noted that currently there is no access to the property from this side of the yard.

The following exhibits were presented:

- Plot plan
- Photographs

Chairman Somers asked for comments in favor or against and there were none. The public hearing was closed at 7:13 p.m.

HDC 12-43 – 52 Pearl Street; Steven Young, owner/applicant; Modify & expand addition. PIN #261914424737

Steven and Caroline Young presented to the Commission regarding their property located at 52 Pearl Street. The applicants noted that this is the third time they have appeared before the Commission and that they have received two prior approvals relative to the design of their home. They are before the Commission currently to propose two designs for approval and to determine if a section of the existing barn, which they would like to remove, is visible from the public way. A COA was issued to allow the removal of 8' from the barn and relocate the existing windows. The applicant is now proposing to remove a portion of the garage from the ridgeline back, which he feels is not visible from the public way, rather than the previously approved 8' section. He will salvage as many of the boards as possible but leave the northern façade as it exists. The applicant explained that the current side yard setback is 10'6" for which the previous owners were granted a variance by the Zoning Board of Appeals. He is proposing two alternate designs for the Commission to approve. Design #1 leaves the rear façade as it exists and adds a new four over one window. The door into the addition has been removed. Three planned windows have been reduced down to two. This will leave an 18" strip that is visible from the public way. Design #2 steps back 3'11" of the second story to reduce the massing. The Commission stated that it cannot approve two sets of plans or designs for the same proposal. The Commission noted that their understanding of the regulations is that submission and approval of a new application for the same project invalidates any previous designs. The applicant stated that it was not his intent to disrupt or change prior approvals.

Chairman Somers asked for comments in favor or against.

Attorney Thomas Collier spoke against the application. His firm represents Robert and Mary Pat Mayer who have filed an administrative appeal to the Commission's decision of May 15, 2012 for renovation of the barn. He feels the application violates the design guidelines and procedures outlined in the HDC Handbook. He is also concerned that the legal notice requirements have not been met. He disagrees that the barn is not within the Commission's purview.

The public hearing was closed at 8:09 p.m.

The public hearing portion of the meeting was closed at 8:10 p.m.

II. DISCUSSION ON ITEMS OF PUBLIC HEARING

HDC 12-42 – 59 Pearl Street

MOTION: To grant a Certificate of Appropriateness as submitted.

Motion made by Everett, seconded by Brady, so voted unanimously. Issued Certificate of Appropriateness #1868.

HDC 12-43 – 52 Pearl Street

This application is in two parts. Part one involves modifying a portion of garage. Part two involves two structural designs presented for Commission approval. The Commission feels it would be prudent to wait to make a decision.

MOTION: To continue to next regularly scheduled public hearing.

Motion made by Brady, seconded by Everett, so voted unanimously.

III. PRE-APPLICATION HEARINGS

Rod Desmarais appeared before the Commission regarding the Central Hall Project; specifically, the placement of an underground propane tank on Gravel Street in the parking area. The previously approved location is too close to a CL&P owned utility pole and may also create a bump out that will compromise parking. He is proposing to relocate the tank to the northeast corner of the lot. There will be a raised element or dome that will protect the tank's regulator that will be located above the level to which water would rise during a flood. This will be landscaped and have a mortared stone retaining wall and signage. Staff noted retaining walls 18" or less do not fall under HDC purview. The applicant has discussed the proposal with Staff and is seeking a ruling from the Commission to determine if the change rises to the level of a public hearing. The Commission determined that a public hearing is not required in order to make this change to the site plan.

IV. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS - None

V. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF September 4, 2012 and September 4, 2012 Special Meeting

MOTION: To approve the minutes of September 4, 2012 and September 4, 2012 Special Meeting as presented.

Motion made by Everett, seconded by Brady, so voted unanimously.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

Brady discussed reaching out to the architects in the community for input on new building materials and green building. He stated that it is difficult to codify and state what you can and cannot do and some decisions are very subjective. Staff noted that the Guidelines are a good thing but they were previously abused and misinterpreted. The Commission discussed the present handbook and what constitutes guidelines.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

Rod Desmarais wished to add to the HDC Handbook discussion. He stated that the Handbook simply contains guidelines; however, the rules and procedures and regulatory guidelines are the only things that the Commission must adhere to.

Brady and Moriarty volunteered to form a committee to investigate rewriting the guidelines.

Staff noted that the Town Council is expected to appoint Everett as a regular member but 5 regular members are required to elect officers. At the Commissioners' request, Staff will check to see if officer elections may be held with only 4 regular members.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

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Motion to adjourn at 8:49 p.m. made by Somers, seconded by Brady, so voted unanimously.

Historic District Commission

Prepared by Lynda Galetta, Office Assistant II